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Meeting Notes

Attendees:	See Attached List	Date/Time:	7/01/02 4:00 to 7:00PM open house & 7:00PM Presentation
		Project No.:	50885
Place:	Windham Center School, Windham, NH	Re:	Windham Public Informational Meeting
		Notes taken by:	Bruce A. Tasker

Prior to the formal presentation, plans were set up in an "open house" setting to address issues, comments, and questions in an informal matter with the public on an individual basis.

For the formal meeting at 7:00PM, Jeff Brillhart opened the meeting and made introductions. He explained that this meeting is one of five Public Informational meetings being held by the Department in each of the communities along the study section of I-93 from Salem to Manchester. This meeting focuses on the status of the project since the last meetings were held in November and December of last year and is part of the Department Public Information meeting process initiated in the spring of 2000.

Jeff explained the Department is charged with improving the capacity and safety of this 18-mile section. He explained that in the Salem and Manchester areas, the highway currently carries over 110,000 vpd (vehicles per day) and 70,000 vpd, respectively. I-93 has a theoretical capacity to carry in the vicinity of 60,000 vpd to 70,000 vpd. By 2020, the projected volumes are approximately 140,000 vpd in Salem and 85,000 vpd in Manchester. The highway is over capacity today and the situation will worsen over time. Given the volume of vehicles on the highway, and the narrow width of the highway, I-93 is less forgiving than it otherwise might be, and consequently less safe.

In addition, given the age of the highway and the fact that it has not seen much in the way of major maintenance over the last 30 to 40 years, the highway is in need of major reconstruction.

The Department is conducting the design and evaluation process using the format of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A Scoping Report was published in the Spring of 2000 and addressed the project purpose and need, the existing conditions of traffic and infrastructure needs, and resources of concern.

Rail opportunities and what might be issues if rail service was implemented was studied. This evaluation was documented in a Rail Alternatives Study published in November of 2000.

The Department looked at a wide range of alternatives, conducted ridership analyses of various modes of transportation, and considered the merits of the possible alternatives. The alternatives were screened that would not address the project purpose and need. This evaluation and screening was documented in the Rationale Report published in the spring of 2001.

Currently, the Department is completing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement discussing the reasonable range of alternatives and how they might affect the environment and address the project purpose and need.

As part of the study the Department has considered:

- A bike route along the I-93 corridor from Exit 2 to Exit 5 as part of a larger north - south of bike system study being done by the Department from Salem to Concord. This larger study will look at how the I-93 bike route might be incorporated to facilitate north-south bike movements.

- Potential secondary growth. Secondary growth may happen as a result of making NH more accessible by widening the highway, which in turn increases the construction of more homes and business in the communities along the corridor and outside the corridor, which may in turn create their own environmental impacts. These impacts to natural resources caused by secondary growth are of concern.

- Improving incident management. The Department has been working with local safety (police and fire) agencies, the state police, and the Federal Highway Administration to consider what steps might be taken to improve incident management capabilities; that is, addressing accidents along I-93 in a more timely manner to minimize delays and congestion. Some measures have been implemented and other will be added to improve the incident management capabilities before construction, during construction, and after construction is completed along the corridor.

- A large range of mitigation possibilities. Mitigation measures are intended to offer a means to offset the impacts associated with widening the highway. These measures include creating wetlands and floodplains and preserving important natural resource areas.

Jeff provided an overview of issues received at the various local meetings. That feedback focused on:

- Whether to widen I-93 to three of four lanes in each direction. The Department is proposing to build four lanes from Salem to Manchester.
- The need to minimize impacts to private properties.
- The need to construct sound barriers to lessen noise in neighborhoods adjacent to the highway.

Individual towns have also expressed their particular concerns relative to how the project affects their community.

For Salem a primary issue has been that the project not exacerbate the flooding that occurs in the Town and within the Spicket River watershed.

For Windham and Salem, a predominant issue has been the need to address water quality and highway runoff, especially with Canobie Lake (drinking water supply for Salem) and Cobbetts Pond located adjacent to the corridor.

Windham is also very much interested in ways to reduce the overall footprint of the highway through the Exit 3 interchange.

In Londonderry and Salem, the neighborhoods have expressed concerns about proposed park and ride lots.

Plan Presentation:

Bruce Tasker then described the plans. He noted the typical roadway cross-section, which includes four 12' travel lanes and 12' wide shoulders on the inside and outside of each barrel. Space (ranging from 60' to 90') for a potential future rail line is also being reserved within the median as part of this project. A bike trail is conceptually depicted at the toe of slope or top of bank along the outside of the corridor from Exit 2 to Exit 5. Sound walls will also be constructed in selected locations throughout the project.

Bruce then described the 200-scale plans for the entire project beginning at the MA / NH border and proceeding north to the I-93 / I-293 split in Manchester. The 200-scale plan depicts the Department's Preferred Alternative, which is to widen I-93 to provide four travel lanes in each direction. Bruce briefly presented the various design elements for the entire project proceeding from south to north:

- The potential future rail corridor would begin in Massachusetts and as it crosses the border into New Hampshire it would be located along the west side of the highway up to Exit 1 where it then crosses over the SB barrel and into the median. The rail line would then remain within the median all the way up to just north of Exit 5 where it would tie back into the existing rail bed to the west.
- The proposed bike path would begin at the Exit 2 park and ride and continue along the corridor, connecting each of the park and rides, before ending at the Exit 5 park and ride.
- Beginning at the MA border the highway would be widened to accommodate four lanes in each direction. The bridge at Cross Street would be replaced; the Exit 1 ramps would be reconstructed to improve the existing geometry; and the bridges over NH 38 would also be replaced.
- In the Exit 2 area, the interchange would be reconstructed to a diamond type interchange configuration, eliminating the existing loop ramps. Pelham Road would be widened through the interchange area and a new park and ride lot is proposed in the southeast quadrant with access from South Policy Street to Raymond Avenue. The Brookdale Road bridge would also be replaced.
- Approaching the Exit 3 area, the NB barrel will be shifted closer to the SB barrel, which will also be relocated and shifted slightly towards the median. A new diamond type interchange configuration is also proposed and a section of NH 111, west of I-93, will be relocated to the north and widened. A new park and ride lot adjacent to the NB barrel is also proposed.
- In general, all of the I-93 bridges south of the Exit 3 weigh stations are being replaced while the majority of the bridges to the north have been held as controls during the design, which will allow many of these newer bridges to be kept in place and widened.
- Approaching Exit 4, the bridges over Lowell Road, Fordway Extension and Kendall Pond Road will all be widened.
- Through the Exit 4 area, the westerly edge was held as a control and the widening occurs to the east. The existing SB ramps will be retained while the NB ramps will be reconstructed. The

NH 102 bridge will be replaced, south of the existing bridge, and NH 102 will be widened. The Ash Street Bridge will also be replaced.

- Just south of Exit 5, the bridges over Stonehenge Road will be widened. The existing diamond interchange will be reconstructed with the same type configuration and NH 28 will be widened through the interchange area. The bridges over NH 28 and the abandoned rail line will be replaced. A new park and ride is also proposed in the northwest quadrant.
- Proceeding into Manchester the bridges over Bodwell road and Cohas Brook. will be widened to accommodate five lanes in each direction to allow for merging and diverging traffic for three lanes for I-93 and two lanes for I-293.
- Sound walls will also be constructed at ten different locations identified along the corridor. Five locations were identified in Salem, and partially carrying over into Windham. One sound wall was identified in Derry, two in Londonderry and two in Manchester.

Bruce then described the 100 scale more detailed plans, which depict the Windham area only.

The Department's preferred alternative for the Windham area is called the Tight Shift Option, which shifts both the NB and SB barrels into the median area. The SB barrel is relocated approximately 150 feet east of the existing NH 111-A overpass and approximately 300 feet to the east of the existing SB barrel over NH 111 before transitioning back to the existing SB barrel to the north and south. The NB barrel shifts adjacent to the SB barrel beginning just north of the Brookdale Road bridge in Salem and ends approximately 0.5 miles south of the NB weigh station. Approximately 90 feet is held in the median between the two barrels to preserve space for a potential future rail line. This shift also allows the NB ramps to be shifted away from the NH 111 / NH 111-A intersection.

The improvements proposed for NH 111, west of I-93, involve relocating a 1.0 mile segment of NH 111approximately 400 to 500 feet north of existing NH 111. The new segment would be a 5-lane section extending to just west of the Wall Street intersection before transitioning to a 3-lane section and matching back into the existing roadway at the signalized intersection at the Village Green stores. The bypassed portion of existing NH 111 would serve as a frontage road and would be connected to relocated NH 111 at a signalized intersection opposite Wall Street. A proposed turnaround at the easterly end would allow vehicles to reverse direction on the dead-ended portion of NH 111, just east of the Castleton drive.

The improvements proposed for NH 111, east of I-93, involve reconstructing and widening to five lanes a 0.4-mile segment of NH 111. These improvements will match to proposed improvements for NH 111 east of NH 111A, which are currently scheduled for construction in early 2004.

For the I-93 SB ramps with NH 111, the proposed improvements include reconstructing the ramps into a diamond type interchange configuration. The existing SB loop off-ramp would be eliminated and a standard (albeit long) diamond type off-ramp constructed that intersects NH 111 at a signalized intersection opposite the SB on-ramp. The SB on-ramp would be reconstructed and lengthened to accommodate a 2-lane on-ramp merging with I-93 SB. For the NH 111 EB traffic that desires to travel SB on I-93, a free flow condition is provided, where the EB traffic would operate in a separate right turn lane along NH 111 before entering the SB on-ramp. For the NH 111 WB traffic that wants to travel southerly onto I-93 a signalized double-left turn is provided for NH 111 WB traffic to I-93 SB. The layout involves developing a signalized intersection along NH 111 where both the SB off and the SB on-ramps are located opposite each other. To access the SB ramp the NH 111 WB traffic would turn left from a double-left turn lane at a signalized intersection and merge to a single-lane ramp. This ramp, and the SB on-ramp for the NH 111 EB traffic, would then merge together south of NH 111-A and proceed southerly as a two lane on-ramp before merging with the I-93 SB mainline through traffic.

The existing NB ramp configuration involves a slip ramp for NB traffic getting off from I-93 and an adjacent loop ramp for NH 111 traffic getting on I-93 NB. This configuration would be replaced with a diamond type configuration similar to the SB ramps.

For the I-93 NB Ramps with NH 111, the I-93 NB traffic exiting to NH 111 would use a diamond type two-lane off-ramp configuration connecting to a signalized intersection with NH 111. To access the NB on-ramp, the NH 111 EB traffic would turn left from a turn lane at a signalized intersection on NH 111 and access the NB on-ramp. The NB on-ramp for NH 111 WB traffic would turn onto the NB on-ramp in a separate lane and merge with the left-turn NH 111 traffic in a single lane before merging with I-93 NB traffic. The NB on-ramp lane would be carried northerly to the existing weigh station area as a separate additional lane to allow for trucks to get up to highway speeds before finally merging with the through traffic.

A park and ride lot is being proposed east of the relocated NB barrel between NH 111A and NH 111. The lot was sized to accommodate 500 vehicles. Access from NH 111 would be via a new right turn in/out only driveway located between the proposed NB ramps and the NH 111A/NH 111intersection. Access for the park and ride to NH 111 A would be located opposite West Shore Drive. NH 111A would be widened to accommodate left-turn vehicles entering both the park and ride and West Shore Drive.

Noise barrier locations are currently being recommended in the following two locations in Windham and extend southerly into Salem:

- North of Brookdale Road along South Shore Road, NB side
- North of Brookdale Road near May Lane, SB side

Bruce identified the locations of the various homes and businesses that would be acquired as part of the highway improvements.

I-93 Widening

Tire service, Common Man Restaurant, Sunoco Gas Station, Dunkin Donuts, Windham Cooperative Kindergarten, and two homes.

NH 111 Relocation

Exxon Gas Station, Computer Auto Sales and one home.

Wetland Mitigation

Jacob Tinus explained that as part of the federal guidelines for projects like this the Department is required to mitigate impacts to wetlands and natural resources. As such the Department has been in the process of identifying possible wetland mitigation sites to offset impacts resulting from the project improvements. Jacob noted that the total number of wetland impacted by the Department's Preferred Alternative is approximately 85 acres which includes approximately one acre for the proposed park and ride lots and approximately 10 acres for the proposed bike path. In the Town of Windham the wetland impacts are approximately 20 acres.

As required by the Resource Agencies, the project must provide mitigation to compensate for the impacts. The mitigation is generally made up of three forms:

- Wetland creation, which creates wetlands out of upland or dry land area.
- Wetland restoration and enhancement, which in effect restores previously filled wetlands or improves existing wetlands vegetation or hydrology.

- Preservation, which involves preserving existing wetlands and adjacent upland.

Jacob noted that all of the potential wetland mitigation sites that the Department is currently considering are shown on a 1"=1000' scale presentation plans. Jacob showed a 1"=500' scale plan of the Windham area, which depicts the existing wetland systems. The Department has looked at more than 60 different possible mitigation sites throughout the project corridor, totaling several thousand acres of land. These mitigation sites have been suggested by local residents, local communities and the resource agencies. In Windham 10 sites comprising approximately 2,700 acres of land are currently under consideration. Jacob described the 10 site locations.

- Southeast Lands; a 950-acre preservation site located on the Salem / Windham municipal boundary, comprised of uplands and wetlands adjacent to Porcupine Brook. The site is located to an adjacent 150 acres in Salem.
- Highway median; a 17-acre site located between the I-93 NB and SB barrels, south of Exit 3, west of Canobie Lake. The tight shift option would allow wetlands in this area to be restored and created.
- Armstrong Property; a 20-acre preservation site located west of I-93, near Cobbetts Pond and within a Wellhead Watershed Protection District.
- Searles Castle; a 100-acre preservation site located east of I-93, west of Searles Road, consisting of forested areas with wide topographic relief.
- Castle Reach; a 150-acre forested preservation site located east of I-93, west of abandoned rail corridor in the area of Mitchell Pond.
- Nassar Property; a 79-acre preservation site located east of the rail corridor, west of NH28 consisting of hilly terrain, forested and open areas crisscrossed by trails.
- Nassar Orchard; a 21-acre preservation site located west of the Nassar Property site consisting of an active orchard and farm that slopes downward toward the rail corridor.
- Flat Rock Brook; a 300-acre preservation site located east of the Nassar properties and consisting of forested upland and wetland with varying terrain.
- Seavey Pond; a 215-acre preservation site located east of NH28, bordering Seavey Pond, and consisting of forested upland and wetland that abuts existing municipal land, some of which is in conservation.
- North Flat Rock Brook; a 650-acre preservation site located east of rail corridor, north of Seavey Pond and Flat Rock Brook, consisting mostly of forested upland and wetlands.

A portion (approximately 250 acres) of the southeast lands, the highway median site, and the Armstrong property have been proposed by the Department thus far for consideration.

Jacob explained that the locations need further evaluation and discussion with the communities and Resource Agencies as to which sites best serve the mitigation package.

Schedule

Jeff Brillhart explained that this is the third in a round of five meetings being held in the corridor communities in June and July. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled to be published in July. A design Public Hearing is scheduled for September / October of this year. The Final Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2003. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2004.

Questions and Comments

Comment:	How will the Windham-Salem bypass project construction coincide with I-93 widening construction?
Jeff Brillhart:	The Windham-Salem NH 111 project will be constructed before the I-93 project. The first part of the construction for Windham-Salem project will go to bid in October of this year.
Comment:	It looks like traffic exiting the SB off-ramp and heading west on NH 111 will have to come to a stop. Why can't that be a merge condition?
Bruce Tasker:	The traffic volume is not heavy enough to really warrant a merge condition, but the exact layout will be looked at during the final design process.
Comment:	Relative to noise, I am concerned that there are existing homes not represented on your plans. I do not understand why there are homes that were completed less than a year ago shown on your plan, and my house which was built over three years ago, is not on your plan. I am concerned that your noise analysis is inaccurate.
Charlie Hood:	The homes you refer to, which would include your property, are not shown because they are outside the study area. They are outside the 66-decibel area and would not be included in the noise analysis.
Comment:	I invite you to visit the second floor of my house and take measurements.
Charlie Hood:	Noise measurements are typically taken at ground level and outside the homes in the residents' back yards. The Department would not take measurements at second floor levels. Perhaps you could give me your name and address afterwards and we could set up a meeting.
Comment:	Could you please point out the areas of the proposed noise barriers?
Bruce Tasker:	Both of the soundwalls in Windham area also extend into Salem. Both begin just north of Brookdale Road one along the SB barrel and one along the NB barrel. The one on the NB side extends approximately 1100' into Windham along South Shore Road, and the one along the SB side near May Lane extends approximately 75' into Windham.
Comment:	There was an article in the local paper about mitigation. Is there a way to better influence the process?
Jeff Brillhart:	Given the impacts to the natural resources and the result of widening the highway, the Department needs to get permits from the environmental agencies. To the degree possible, the Department would like to incorporate the Town's priorities for mitigation with the requirements of the Resource Agencies. The Castle Reach site when it was a 400 acre site seemed early on like a great site that would address the Town's priority and provide the type of mitigation the agencies are looking for. Unfortunately, the Department was unable to purchase the property. The southeast lands site is another area the agencies have listed as an important natural area to be protected. It has been noted by the Town as a priority. The other two sites proposed by the Department attempt to address water quality issues associated with Canobie Lake and Cobbetts Pond. Further evaluations and discussions are necessary before the mitigation issue is resolved.
Comment:	If you are moving the footprint of the interchange in towards the median, can you restore the wetlands in the southeast quadrant?
Bruce Tasker:	Our intent is to reconnect the wetlands that were severed as part of the original I-93 construction where feasible.

Comment:	You are proposing 3 signalized intersections within 3000'along NH 111. At what level of service (LOS) will the intersections be operating when the project is completed in 2010?
Bruce Tasker:	They will operate at a LOS C/D in the year 2020 and better than that in 2010.
Comment:	What will happen to the existing park and ride at Wall Street? Is the only way out of the proposed Park and Ride to take NH 111A? What will that do to the traffic during rush hour traffic at NH 111A? Will that bring the Rte 111 bypass into failure again?
Jeff Brillhart:	Relative to the existing park and ride lot, it may become surplus property and sold.
Bruce Tasker:	Access from the proposed park and ride onto NH 111 is via a right turn in and out. Traffic will exit only eastbound on NH 111. At NH 111A the park and ride traffic can turn in either direction via an unsignalized intersection. The unsignalized intersection would operate at a LOS D/E or near capacity in the year 2020. The Department would place conduit under the road when the intersection is constructed to accommodate future signals.
Comment:	Is it possible that traffic heading east on NH 111 towards Range Road will take the Park and Ride access road as a short cut.
Marty Kennedy:	That is possible, particularly for local residents who would be aware of the access.
Comment:	I would like to see the two wetlands located on either side of the NB barrel and south of NH 111A be reconnected.
Comment:	At the NB on-ramp where you have the truck climbing lane and the steeper grade, could you look at the noise issue a little closer?
Charlie Hood:	The existing conditions and the proposed conditions were modeled with respect to the noise analysis. The truck climbing lane and the grades were taken into consideration. A sound wall is not warranted and may not be practical either.
Comment:	Is there anyway to connect Griffin Park (on the west side of I-93) to the bike path (on the east side of I-93)?
Bruce Tasker:	The Department is currently completing a larger bike study and perhaps this request could be incorporated into that study. One possibility would be to construct paved shoulders for bicyclists along NH 111A to allow for access to Griffin Park.
Peter Griffin:	Could you elaborate on the joint rail study proposed with Massachusetts.
Jeff Brillhart:	The Department is in the process of trying to conduct a joint rail study with officials from Massachusetts which will look at rail possibilities from Manchester, NH to Boston. It is anticipated that eventually NH is going to need other modes of transportation to supplement our highway system. Further widening of I-93 beyond four lanes in each direction does not appear to be a reasonable option. When traffic volumes warrant additional capacity, it is expected that other modes, such as rail will provide the capacity. Funding has been requested through Senator Smith's office, and if it is approved, then it is hoped that Massachusetts will participate in a more complete transit study of the options to supplement the I-93 corridor. The potential for rail in NH is contingent upon the possibilities and constraints in Massachusetts. Can MA handle more trains and customers? Hopefully the funding will be available in October.
Comment:	What sort of budget are we looking at here?
Jeff Brillhart:	Two million dollars has been proposed.

Comment:	I am concerned about reliance on rail, especially with Amtrak almost going bankrupt this week.
Jeff Brillhart:	From the Department's perspective, we need to do better than just driving cars. Amtrak has problems, although it appears that Amtrak is more cost effective in the northeast than elsewhere in the country. Relative to government subsidies for rail service, I'm not sure they can be avoided. Such subsidies are seemingly required for rail service throughout the world.
Comment:	I am concerned about the location of the new Park and Ride. There is a new development going in at the corner of NH111 and NH111A, involving a McDonald's. How will that coupled with the park and ride traffic affect the NH 111/NH 111A intersection?
Bruce Tasker:	We will need to get a copy of the traffic volumes for the proposed development and take a closer look at the situation. Within next three years the Department will be improving the NH 111/NH 111A intersection with additional lanes to the east and west. This intersection will operate much better once that is constructed. Once the 5-lane section for NH 111 is extended to the west as part of the I-93 widening, the intersection is expected to operate at even greater efficiency.
Comment:	When the project is completed will NH111A have double lefts onto NH 111 westbound?
Jeff Brillhart:	It will have a single left. As development happens along NH 111A, the Town will need to work with the developers to improve NH 111A.
Comment:	Why not keep the Park and Ride where it is?
Jeff Brillhart:	The bus companies have told the Department that it is too far from the highway to entice ridership for bus service. Having the park and ride in the interchange area, visible to the public and more readily accessible should greatly enhance its use.
Comment:	What happened to the free flow option at the interchange?
Jeff Brillhart:	From a strict transportation perspective, the Loop Option has merit. The proposed diamond configuration will operate at an acceptable level of service, is less expensive, and results in a smaller highway foot print. The Department believes that the diamond option is in keeping with the Town's preference.
Comment:	I represent the Sister's of Mercy, who own about 173 acres of land in the northeast quadrant of the interchange. I am requesting that you include a signal at the proposed park and ride access to NH 111. That way the property that the Sister's own could be developed with good access and help improve the Town's tax base.
Comment:	It would seem premature to consider access to the Sisters of Mercy property via NH 111 opposite the park and ride lot access, because the Sister's access would have to pass through property owned by others.
Bruce Tasker:	The Department has looked at the potential problems that a large traffic generator could pose as the fourth leg of a signalized intersection at the park and ride access. Besides the problem of property being owned by others, the idea poses transportation capacity and level of service issues for NH 111. A signalized intersection handling relatively large volumes of traffic will overwhelm to the point of failure, the intersection of NH 111 and the NB ramps. In addition, such a signalized intersection would compromise the 1,000 to 1,200 foot spacing we are trying to achieve along NH 111 between intersection. Perhaps there is a possibility of a fourth leg to the NH 111/NH 111A intersection in the future that could be used for access to the property.

Comment:	There is about 30 to 40 acres of land in the northwest quadrant of the interchange that looks to be landlocked. Have you considered how that parcel could be accessed?
Jeff Brillhart:	The Department has looked at access from relocated NH111 as well as access from the bypassed section of NH 111 via a bridge over the proposed relocated NH 111. At this point in time, the Department prefers not to have access from the proposed relocated NH 111, because it would compromise the integrity of the new section of NH 111 and potentially the interchange. Hopefully, in the future this parcel could be accessed from Wall Street.
Comment:	Have you considered the use of the bike path for motorized vehicles?
Jeff Brillhart:	At this time, the Department feels that it would be used for bicycles and pedestrians. Perhaps in the wintertime it could be used for snowmobiles.
Comment:	Have you considered the use of the Segway Transporter on the bike path?
Jeff Brillhart:	As they become more prevalent that issue will need to be worked out.